

CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF NEW YORK

----- X

TRANSCRIPT OF THE MINUTES

Of the

COMMITTEE ON CIVIL SERVICE AND LABOR

----- X

January 27, 2025
Start: 1:18 p.m.
Recess: 3:05 p.m.

HELD AT: 250 BROADWAY - COMMITTEE ROOM, 16TH
FLOOR

B E F O R E: Carmen N. De La Rosa, Chairperson

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Tiffany Cabán
Erik D. Bottcher
Eric Dinowitz
Oswald Feliz
Julie Menin
Francisco P. Moya

OTHER COUNCIL MEMBERS ATTENDING:

Jumaane Williams, Public Advocate

A P P E A R A N C E S

Katrina Porter, Chief Human Capital Officer for New York City and Deputy Commissioner for Human Capital at New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services

Kadian Outar, Assistant Commissioner of Workforce Operations at New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services

Robert Alexander, Assistant Commissioner for Examinations at New York City Department of Citywide Administrative Services

Dan Pollak, First Deputy Commissioner of New York City Office of Labor Relations

Oren Barzilay, Fire Department of New York Union

Dalvanie K. Powell, President of United Probation Officers Association

Megan Chambers, co-manager of the Labor Union, the Laundry Distribution and Food Service Joint Board, Workers United, SEIU

Gerber Archila, member of the Workers' Union

Jeilin Montes, shop steward for Workers United

Christopher Leon Johnson, self

2 SEARGENT-AT-ARMS: This is a microphone
3 check on the Committee on Civil Service and Labor,
4 recorded by James Marino on 1-27-2025, located on the
5 16th Floor Hearing Room.

6 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Good afternoon, good
7 afternoon. Welcome to the New York City Council
8 hearing on the Committee on Civil Service and Labor.

9 At this time, please silence all
10 electronics and do not approach the dais. I repeat,
11 do not approach the dais.

12 If you need to fill out a slip in person,
13 you may do so at the back of the room with the
14 Sergeants.

15 If you want to fill out an online
16 testimony, you can fill it out at
17 testimony@council.nyc.gov. That is
18 testimony@council.nyc.gov.

19 Any further questions or concerns, you
20 could please contact the Sergeants.

21 Thank you for your cooperation.

22 Chair, you may begin.

23 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you.

24 [GAVEL] Good afternoon, everyone. I'm Council Member
25 Carmen De La Rosa, Chair of the Committee on Civil

2 Service and Labor. Welcome to today's hearing, where
3 we will be exploring the City's ongoing efforts to
4 address challenges in recruitment and retention
5 within our municipal workforce. We will also be
6 hearing the following legislation. Intro. 671,
7 sponsored by myself, in relation to providing civil
8 service examination fee waivers for high schoolers
9 and first-time applicants; Reso. 333, sponsored by
10 Public Advocate Williams, in relation to eliminating
11 the subminimum wage for employees based on their
12 disability or age; and Reso. 598, sponsored by
13 myself, in relation to the City's healthcare
14 institutions contracting with laundry companies that
15 respect workers' rights.

16 Our municipal workforce is the backbone
17 of New York City. Every day, hardworking and
18 dedicated employees provide essential services across
19 all five boroughs, ensuring that our City operates
20 smoothly. We owe these public servants our deep
21 gratitude for their tireless commitment to keeping
22 New York running. However, the City's public
23 workforce has been contending with several
24 intersecting personnel challenges. We have observed
25 elevated rates of attrition at many key agencies,

2 particularly in public safety, including correction
3 officers and uniformed police officers, as well as
4 call dispatchers and school safety agents. Staffing
5 shortages are also impacting EMS, EMT units, and
6 public hospital emergency departments, leading to
7 delays in emergency care. In addition to those
8 challenges, the City faces increased competition from
9 private sector employers who often offer attractive
10 benefits and flexible work environments, and recruit
11 from the pool of skilled, qualified candidates. When
12 compounded, these issues threaten the City's ability
13 to maintain a high level of service New Yorkers rely
14 on every day.

15 Today, we look forward to hearing from
16 DCAS and OLR regarding their efforts to recruit and
17 retain staff as well as their role in collaborating
18 with agencies to make sure that they are providing
19 civil service examinations for positions experiencing
20 high vacancy rates. We will seek their feedback on
21 legislation before the Committee, particularly for
22 Intro. 671. We hope to identify some key positions
23 that are facing challenges to retention and to
24 explore actionable strategies to improve access to
25 the City's employment. Together, we must work to

2 strengthen the pathways into public service and
3 ensure that the City can continue to deliver for all
4 New Yorkers.

5 I'd like to thank our Committee Staff,
6 Senior Policy Analyst Elizabeth Arzt and Legislative
7 Counsel Rie Ogasawara, for their hard work in
8 preparing for today's hearing. I'd also like to thank
9 my Staff, Chief-of-Staff James Burke, Deputy Chief-
10 of-Staff and Legislative Director Kiana Diaz, and
11 Communications Director Frey Familia.

12 I would like to recognize that we've been
13 joined by Council Member Moya on Zoom.

14 We will be hearing testimony first from
15 representatives of the Administration. I now turn to
16 the Committee Counsel to administer the oath for the
17 panel of Administrative Officials, including Katrina
18 Porter, Chief Human Capital Officer, Kadian Outar,
19 Assistant Commissioner for Workforce Operations,
20 Robert Alexander, Assistant Commissioner for
21 Examinations, and Daniel Pollak of OLR.

22 COMMITTEE COUNSEL OGASAWARA: We will now
23 hear testimony from the Administration. Before we
24 begin, I will administer the affirmation. Panelists,
25 please raise your right hand, and I will read the

2 affirmation once, then call on each of you
3 individually to respond.

4 Do you affirm to tell the truth, the
5 whole truth, and nothing but the truth before this
6 Committee, and to respond honestly to Council Member
7 questions?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Yes.

9 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OUTAR: Yes.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ALEXANDER: Yes.

11 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Yes.

12 COMMITTEE COUNSEL OGASAWARA: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you. You
14 may begin.

15 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Good
16 afternoon. My name is Katrina Porter, and I'm the
17 Chief Human Capital Officer for the City of New York
18 and Deputy Commissioner for Human Capital at the
19 Department of Citywide Administrative Services, also
20 known as DCAS. I am joined here today by my
21 colleagues, DCAS Assistant Commissioner Kadian Outar,
22 DCAS Assistant Commissioner for Examinations Robert
23 Alexander, and Daniel Pollack, First Deputy
24 Commissioner with the Office of Labor Relations.

2 To begin, I would like to give a brief
3 overview of DCAS's recruitment and retention efforts
4 on behalf of the City of New York. Recruitment and
5 retention are essential to ensuring the City has the
6 workforce necessary to meet its mission. These
7 efforts are reflective of the Administration's
8 commitment to deliver vital City services for New
9 Yorkers every day. Among the most important tools in
10 DCAS' toolkit is the administration of civil service
11 examinations. These exams provide an even playing
12 field to obtaining a career within New York City
13 government and an eligible pool of candidates for
14 agencies to draw from when job openings become
15 available. Over 80 percent of City government
16 positions require candidates to take and pass a civil
17 service exam. We employ a multifaceted approach to
18 outreach, engaging community-based organizations,
19 leveraging social media, conducting targeted press
20 campaigns, and utilizing advertising to inform New
21 Yorkers about career opportunities in municipal
22 government. As of today, we are proud to share that
23 our DCAS jobs newsletter has grown tremendously. To
24 date, over 200,000 job-seeking subscribers receive
25 the newsletter monthly. As part of the technological

2 enhancements made to the revamped JobsNYC online
3 portal, which connects prospective candidates to all
4 open City jobs, we have seen the number of employment
5 applications hit new highs. The number of
6 applications received through the JobsNYC website
7 increased by 87 percent in Fiscal Year 2024 compared
8 to the prior Fiscal Year, '23, to a record
9 approximately 1.3 million applications. This reflects
10 the success of our efforts to make City jobs more
11 accessible and appealing to New Yorkers. All these
12 efforts supplement our traditional outreach and
13 collaboration both internally and externally.

14 The City, along with DCAS and other
15 agencies, engages in interagency and external
16 partnerships with institutions like the City
17 University of New York, New York City Public Schools,
18 and non-profit and community-based organizations,
19 including those that serve justice-involved
20 individuals to market and promote City career
21 opportunities. Further bolstering our recruitment
22 efforts, DCAS operates several pathway programs,
23 including fellowships, internships, and
24 apprenticeships which help recruit the next
25 generation of talent directly into the municipal

2 workforce. All told, our recruitment efforts are
3 showing meaningful signs of progress in attracting
4 job seekers to City work.

5 While recruiting top talent to municipal
6 government services is vital to the City's success,
7 we also know that retaining those same talented New
8 Yorkers is just as important. We want people not only
9 to thrive in their careers but also grow
10 professionally so they can make a bigger positive
11 impact on their fellow New Yorkers. To foster growth
12 and long-term commitment, we offer robust
13 professional development and promotional
14 opportunities tailored to employees' career
15 aspirations. As entry-level civil service exams
16 provide a gateway to solid middle-class jobs with
17 good benefits, promotion exams provide important
18 pathways for upward mobility. To afford employees the
19 tools and resources they need to grow, DCAS and the
20 City offers professional development training,
21 including through our New York City Management
22 Academy, Leadership Institute, training expos, the
23 DCAS course catalog, and access to our new
24 comprehensive e-learning platform nycitylearn. Also,
25 we will soon be rolling out career counseling as a

service to City employees in accordance with Local Law 75 of 2024. We look forward to seeing all these efforts continue to bear fruit in the coming months.

When we look at the data, we see that the City of New York is competitive with private sector when it comes to filling vacancies with talented New Yorkers, and our retention rate of 90 percent is similar to other large public sector employers like New York State, which is also at 90 percent, and the federal government at 94 percent. Data indicates that citywide agency vacancies are low overall at approximately 5.7 percent, which is down from a high of 8.4 percent in November of 2021. We continue to see very high rates for both retention and tenure. Compared to the three-year average time that an employer stays in the private sector, DCAS data shows that City employees serve more than three times as long, or about 10 years. In fact, three-quarters of the municipal workforce has served for five years or more.

Thanks to the myriad of programs and policies in place to support City employees, the City of New York is one of the top employers of choice for New Yorkers. While the data demonstrates progress

2 towards recruitment and retention, we know that
3 there's always more work to do, and DCAS both
4 appreciates and shares the Council's interest in
5 further improving retention efforts.

6 Before concluding, I would like to speak
7 to Intro. 671. DCAS supports the spirit of this
8 legislation. However, I should note that through our
9 work, we have found that eliminating civil service
10 exam fees does not increase the number of exam takers
11 or passing candidates. Despite introducing several
12 avenues for applicants to have exam fees waived over
13 the years, many of which remain in place, we have
14 found that while more people may apply to take exams,
15 the number of test takers that show up for the exam
16 does not increase. We believe that this bill aligns
17 with the State's new law that expands opportunities
18 for high school seniors to take civil service exams
19 within 12 months of meeting diploma and age
20 requirements, which has already been operationalized
21 at DCAS.

22 I hope we have made it clear that the
23 City and DCAS are constantly working to ensure
24 agencies have access to the tools necessary to
25 recruit and retain the staff they need to deliver on

2 their individual missions and provide vital city
3 services to the people of New York. We always
4 recognize that there is more work to be done and
5 challenges may be overcome. Although creative
6 partnerships across government, including with public
7 safety and human services agencies, we are looking to
8 tackle recruitment challenges to ensure that our city
9 continues to be an employer of choice for New
10 Yorkers. Thank you for the opportunity to be here
11 today.

12 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Good
13 afternoon, Chair De La Rosa and members of the
14 Committee. My name is Daniel Pollak, and I'm the
15 First Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Labor
16 Relations. Today, I will briefly outline our efforts
17 through collective bargaining to improve recruitment
18 and retention in the City workforce.

19 Coming out of the COVID pandemic and the
20 nationwide recruitment and retention challenges,
21 commonly called the Great Resignation, recruitment
22 and retention was a focus of the Administration in
23 the current round of bargaining. First and foremost,
24 the five-year pattern in this round, which we refer
25 to as the 2021 to 2026 round of bargaining, include

the most significant wage increases in more than a decade, totaling 16.21 percent over the five-year term. Since our first agreement with DC37 in February of 2023, we have settled contracts with 138 bargaining units, covering over 98 percent of unionized City employees. Negotiations with the remaining units are ongoing. We also introduced a new initiative in this round to tackle areas with significant recruitment and retention challenges. For eligible units with demonstrable recruitment and retention issues, the union could allocate up to 0.5 percent of funding through a contract extension or similar means, with the City matching this funding by an additional 0.5 percent. This feature recognizes that recruitment and retention issues are a joint problem for management and labor and that we can work together to address those issues through collaboration and negotiation. This equity funding has facilitated permanent lifeguard salary increases, a retention bonus program for 9-1-1 operators, accelerated top-pay salary schedules for special officers and school safety agents, and a new salary structure for probation officers. These are just some

2 of the provisions we have reached agreement on in
3 this round to enhance recruitment and retention.

4 Our agreement with DC37, signed onto by
5 numerous other unions as well, also included a
6 flexible work pilot. Through that pilot and the
7 ongoing work of a labor management committee
8 established by the DC37 agreement, we created a
9 remote work pilot and have rolled out remote work at
10 every eligible City agency. We've also established a
11 compressed workweek pilot, which is being implemented
12 at many agencies. The flexible work pilot runs
13 through May 31, 2025, and as that deadline
14 approaches, we will continue our ongoing discussions
15 with DC37 to evaluate the pilot and plan our next
16 steps.

17 Thank you for the opportunity to testify,
18 and I'm happy to take any questions.

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you all for
20 being here and for your testimony. I want to
21 recognize we've also been joined by Council Member
22 Feliz. Welcome. And I think we may have one more, and
23 Council Member Cabán on Zoom.

24 Thank you all for coming and for
25 continuing to have this conversation. It's an ongoing

2 dialogue, and I appreciate both the openness and your
3 willingness to collaborate on the issue of retention
4 and improving the workforce. I know we're mission-
5 aligned when it comes to City workers.

6 I do have a few questions. One of the
7 questions that I have for DCAS is about the two-for-
8 one hiring policy. How has the two-for-one hiring
9 policy impacted DCAS and other agencies in meeting
10 the staffing needs, especially in departments with
11 critical or immediate service demands?

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, thank you
13 for that question. So, you know, DCAS is, you know,
14 no different than any other City agency. You know, we
15 actually use different strategies to address some of
16 our recruitment challenges, you know, such as
17 targeted hiring events. Most recently, we had a
18 targeted event for our attorney population. But we
19 try our best to navigate to ensure that there are no
20 resource service delivery interruptions for our
21 customers. Kadian, do you want to talk about anything
22 with OCR?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OUTAR: I think, to
24 Katrina's point, it's really about getting out there
25 and letting folks know about the opportunities that

2 are available and being creative in that way, and
3 then being creative in how we make sure that we're
4 bringing those services to the community so they're
5 aware.

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yeah. I think,
7 you know, we agree that there have been efforts to
8 recruit and to bring in talent, but once the talent
9 is brought in, one, we've seen delays in the hiring
10 process, and two, this two-for-one hiring policy
11 makes it difficult for the person to actually be
12 offered the job. So, are you saying that there's no
13 impact at this moment with the two-for-one hiring?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, not
15 saying that there's no impact. We, you know, struggle
16 with the same challenges as other agencies, but we do
17 try to come up with creative ways to address, you
18 know, our staffing constraints.

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: So, how would you
20 get around that?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, one thing
22 that I would mention is the HR Transformation
23 Project. It was an interagency program where we
24 worked with City agencies to streamline the hire
25 time. We looked at our onboarding documentation and

2 worked with these agencies to streamline so that we
3 could onboard candidates more quickly. Created a new
4 employee webpage where all new hire and policies and
5 procedures that pertain to City employees are in one
6 place so that, you know, employees have an
7 opportunity to just bring transparency to the new
8 hire process.

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: And in terms of
10 the two-for-hire rule, how are exemptions decided?
11 Because I was told in the past that there are
12 exemptions for certain agencies that have urgent
13 vacancies or some of the public safety
14 considerations. How are those exemptions decided? Are
15 you aware?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER:
17 Unfortunately, I do not have direct insight into
18 that. We work with our internal HR department, you
19 know, to address our, in the human capital, to
20 address any staffing vacancies that we have to fill.
21 We work directly with our HR department.

22 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: So, if there's an
23 agency that comes to you all and says, there's an
24 urgent need here, are you having the conversation
25 with OMB about needing, you know, permission or

2 needing clearance for that line to hire or an
3 exemption?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: No, we do not
5 provide that sort of guidance to agencies. One thing
6 that we, lately what we've been advising agencies is
7 to maybe consider our Civil Service Pathway
8 Fellowship Program. This is a program that's managed
9 by DCAS and it is exempt from the two-for-one, you
10 know, so we will help agencies with, provide agencies
11 with guidance and strategies on how to navigate that
12 criteria.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: So, are you
14 finding that agencies are having those conversations
15 directly with OMB, not via DCAS?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Those
17 conversations do not happen via DCAS. We do not have
18 insight into agency hiring practices outside of our
19 internal DCAS HR department.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Thank you
21 for clarifying that.

22 So, a question for OLR. Is OLR reviewing
23 pay scales and benefit packages to ensure
24 competitiveness with the private sector, especially
25 for high-demand roles?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Thank
3 you for that question, Chair De La Rosa. So, you
4 know, I mentioned the equity funding construct that
5 we had in this round, so certainly when we were
6 looking at places that we should be targeting for,
7 you know, to address recruitment and retention
8 issues, we would, you know, look at any info that we
9 had about, you know, issues with recruitment and
10 retention that often includes competitiveness with
11 the private sector so where there is a title that,
12 you know, the agency was telling us was losing too
13 many people to the private sector, unable to recruit,
14 that is something we would look at. You know, benefit
15 packages, we're talking about health benefits, that's
16 negotiated on a citywide basis, not something we
17 would have altered title by title.

18 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: So, how does the
19 equity fund come into play? So, if there is a
20 position that is losing workers, you all would sort
21 of tap into the equity fund to try and bring the
22 wages to a more competitive level?

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Yes.
24 Well, it would be through negotiation. So, you know,
25 it's always through the conversation with the union,

2 but, you know, when we're bargaining a contract with
3 the union, we would, you know, be aware of what
4 titles within that union, if any, had we heard about
5 issues, we would also see if the union had any titles
6 where they felt there were issues. And then, you
7 know, if we felt the data supported that there is a
8 recruitment and retention problem, and both sides
9 wanted to use this construct to address it, we would
10 then try to figure out what we could do to enhance
11 their wages, or we've also worked out retention bonus
12 programs and other things.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: It would
14 routinely still follow the pattern?

15 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Yes, it
16 would fit within the pattern, that construct I
17 described of, you know, 0.5 percent from the City,
18 0.5 percent from the union, the union would have to
19 fund the 0.5 percent within the pattern, and the City
20 then would match 0.5 percent, that's, you know,
21 essentially, it's not outside the pattern, but it's,
22 you know, in addition to the pattern wage increases,
23 there's this additional 0.5 percent match.

24 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Got it. For roles
25 that have seen the highest turnover rates, such as

2 police officers, correction officers, school safety
3 agents, what specific retention incentives are being
4 considered?

5 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: So, I
6 can speak to the, well, we have negotiated for all
7 those titles in this round. So, you know, for police
8 officers, we were able to negotiate an increase to
9 the starting salary, which, you know, I think both
10 sides felt had to be addressed beyond just the
11 pattern wage increases. We also, obviously, you know,
12 with the pattern wage increases, the top pay for
13 police officers was brought significantly higher. For
14 school safety agents, it used to take seven years to
15 get to top pay and, looking at that, we and the union
16 both felt that, you know, that new employees come in,
17 it's, you know, they see that top pay seven years
18 away, and that's a little too long to wait so we were
19 able to figure out a way within the pattern and using
20 that equity funding to take off two pay steps so now
21 it's five years to get to top pay, which is a little
22 more kind of insight for a new employee. For
23 correction officers, we negotiated a retention bonus
24 program that actually will take place in 2027, where
25 correction officers, you know, kind of as an

2 incentive for more senior correction officers to stay
3 on for another couple of years in life, all the
4 challenges they're facing. There will be a series of
5 bonus payments for employees with, I believe, 10 or
6 more years of service in 2027.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Does DCAS play a
8 role at all in collaborating with agencies to
9 determine incentives?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: We do not.

11 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Thank you.
12 Has OLR explored enhancement to employee benefits
13 such as childcare, support, mental health resources,
14 tuition assistance to improve job satisfaction or
15 retention?

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: So,
17 when we talk about improvements to health benefits,
18 you know, we are constantly talking about health
19 benefits with our unions. You know, obviously, we are
20 dealing with an environment of sharply rising costs,
21 which we are trying to control, but within that kind
22 of constraint, we do try to offer the most
23 competitive health benefits we can. You know,
24 something that we recently announced for managerial
25 employees, because that's something that we're able

2 to do, was a new benefit for egg or sperm donation
3 and surrogate costs, which is something we're proud
4 of and, you know, is getting off the ground now, so
5 those are some of the things we are doing. In terms
6 of mental health, you know, I do want to take this
7 opportunity to just, our EAP program, as well as our
8 WorkWell program, are both, you know, really valuable
9 programs for City employees. WorkWell provides
10 wellness programming, including fitness and other
11 wellness programming to City agencies. Since it was
12 created about 10 years ago, it's grown hugely, and
13 really, you know, we get universally positive
14 feedback from every agency that participates, from
15 every employee that participates. EAP is committed to
16 dealing with employee mental health issues. Last
17 year, they saw nearly 30,000 clients, which was a
18 record for them, so we continue to expand that
19 program. We have some places we have targeted EAP
20 programs. For example, ACS Child Protection, we have
21 a program there where there are counselors placed in
22 each borough, because we know that's a job that has a
23 large kind of toll on employees' mental health. So,
24 both those programs are also really designed to help
25 support employees, because, you know, we know,

2 obviously, there are a lot of tough jobs in the city,
3 and it's not all about compensation and those jobs
4 can take a toll.

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you. While
6 most salary ranges are established through collective
7 bargaining agreements, what criteria do agencies use
8 to decide where a new employee falls within that
9 range?

10 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Most
11 collective bargaining agreements have a mandated
12 salary for new hires, where new hires are paid a
13 certain rate, and then after two years of City
14 service, the employee is subject to the minimum to
15 maximum range. In those cases where there's a range,
16 you know, any changes within that range would be
17 subject to discussion between the agency and OMB.

18 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. The City
19 announced an expanded remote work pilot in 2023 for
20 16,500 employees. How is the pilot progressing, and
21 does the City have plans to expand this pilot any
22 further?

23 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Thank
24 you, Council Member, for that question. Obviously,
25 you know, we are in 2025 now. It's been nearly two

2 years since we launched that program. You know, it's
3 been implemented at, I believe, around four of the
4 agencies. It expires May 31st, and it is subject to a
5 one-year extension by mutual agreement. We've been
6 meeting with DC37 practically weekly since the
7 program launched to work out issues, to kind of
8 discuss, you know, how it's going, and I think, you
9 know, as we've now entered the new year with the
10 expiration approaching, those conversations will turn
11 to what the next steps are, so there's an option kind
12 of baked into the agreement for a one-year extension,
13 and then obviously if either side wants to raise any
14 potential changes, we would do that.

15 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: When is the
16 expiration?

17 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: May
18 31st.

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: May 31st. And so
20 far, do you know if that 16,500 number has sort of
21 stayed steady?

22 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: So, the
23 number that I knew of initially, I believe, was over
24 20,000, but we don't keep a constant tracker, so we
25 had the initial numbers because the City Committee

2 approved all the rosters, but since then, there may
3 have been changes. Some people may have been added.
4 Some people may have been removed. That's all at
5 agency discretion so we don't know how many there are
6 right now for sure.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: All right. So
8 after May, we may have a clearer picture.

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. In March
11 2025, DCAS' first report summarizing the responses
12 received in exit surveys and interviews of resigning
13 and retiring employees is due to the Council, so it's
14 due in March 2025. Have you started compiling any
15 information and, if so, could you share what trends
16 have emerged from those surveys to identify the
17 primary reasons for employee attrition?

18 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OUTAR: Thank you
19 for that question. The team is still compiling the
20 data for that survey. We have received the initial
21 raw data from the agencies, and right now, we're in
22 the process of compiling that information and will be
23 ready to publish for the March 30th date.

2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Thank you.
3 We're looking forward to seeing some of the
4 responses.

5 Nationwide, there is a significant
6 pattern of retiring employees departing their
7 positions in local and state government, retirement
8 eligible individuals are less likely to postpone
9 retirement, and those under the retirement age are
10 increasingly likely to accelerate their retirement.
11 Have those trends been observed in New York City
12 municipal workforce in recent years?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, our data
14 shows that, you know, as I stated in the testimony,
15 that we are retaining our employees at about 90
16 percent of our employees have more than 10 years of
17 service. However, our most recent workforce profile
18 report was released on Friday, and we're showing that
19 about the retirement eligibility percentages going
20 down. We're showing about 14 percent of the City's
21 workforce is retirement eligible between Fiscal Years
22 '24 and '28. That's down from '23.

23 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you. Do you
24 have the '23 numbers on you by any chance?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: The '23
3 number is 14 percent.

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Thank you
5 for that.

6 Commissioner Pollak, could you go into
7 some detail about the bonus pay incentive for 9-1-1
8 dispatchers?

9 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Sure.
10 So, we negotiated with DC37 using equity funding a
11 bonus of 10,000 dollars per year, which is broken
12 down to 5,000 dollars for each six-month period for
13 9-1-1 operators.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Say it again,
15 5,000?

16 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: 5,000
17 dollars for each six-month period. So, initially it
18 was January through June, then July through December.
19 We've recently negotiated some modifications to the
20 program. Also, there's an attendance threshold to be
21 eligible for the bonus. So, you know, 9-1-1 has been
22 dealing with kind of large absence problems, and one
23 of the things that we really want to focus on, both
24 the union and the City, was essentially to give an
25 incentive for those who are, you know, coming to work

2 a lot and are not excessively absent so we set a
3 threshold for attendance where you have to meet that
4 threshold to be eligible for the bonus. And so we
5 have now moved into, you know, the first year has
6 passed. We made some modifications based on feedback
7 and concerns, and now there's kind of some slight
8 adjustments for the next year.

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: In terms of the
10 requirements for attendance, one of the things that
11 was very jarring for the Committee was last time when
12 DC37 actually testified before the Committee, and
13 they testified that 9-1-1 calls were going to
14 voicemail. That is an urgent problem, and that 9-1-1
15 dispatchers were working overtime to the tune of 16-
16 plus hours. That is something that obviously raised a
17 lot of flags with the Committee Members, and I was
18 wondering, one, if you had the numbers on what is the
19 vacancy rate for 9-1-1 dispatchers and, two, is this
20 bonus that is in correlation with absence taking into
21 account how much overtime these workers are expected
22 to work? So, for example, if they're working an
23 overtime shift and they decide they got to leave
24 early for whatever reason, is that being counted
25 against them for the bonuses?

2 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Thank
3 you for those questions. So, I'm not aware of the
4 vacancy rate. You know, NYPD would certainly be aware
5 of that. I will say that, you know, we have been
6 really focused on this at OLR. We have been working
7 on 9-1-1 operators for many years now. One thing that
8 we have had going for a number of years is a
9 compressed work week pilot for them that started, I
10 think, three or four years ago, predating the larger
11 compressed work agreement. We have made a number of
12 modifications through the years. We have increased
13 the number of people who are on the compressed
14 schedule. We just extended that, again, for another
15 six-month period, and, you know, so like I said, we
16 have been very involved with that unit. We know that
17 there are challenges there. We know it is a really
18 tough job, we know there is excessive overtime, high
19 absence rates, and it is something that we are
20 looking to improve.

21 In terms of the attendance threshold, it
22 does not really count overtime, so it does not, you
23 know, count overtime for or against you if you, you
24 know, do not work an overtime shift or only work part
25 of a shift because you have to, you know, go home

2 sick or something, that does not count against you.
3 It really only counts your regular shift.

4 And the other thing I will say is we did
5 bring down for the prior year, we brought down the
6 thresholds we initially had just to, you know,
7 recognizing it was a tough year and that, you know,
8 so some more people should be eligible for the bonus
9 than initially were.

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you. I have
11 a few more questions.

12 I just want to recognize that Council
13 Member Dinowitz has joined us on Zoom as well.

14 In terms of the 9-1-1 dispatchers, last
15 question on this, I hope, but are they being provided
16 some of that stress and wellness packaging that you
17 spoke about with some of your other bargaining?
18 Because it seems to me like this is a workforce that
19 is highly stressed due to the nature of their job.

20 FIRST DEPUTY COMMISSIONER POLLAK: Well,
21 there's nothing specific for them, but, you know,
22 it's something we'll certainly explore, you know,
23 with both our Director of EAP as well as WorkWell. I
24 will say the person who runs the WorkWell program has
25 also been kind of one of the point people involved in

2 the compressed work week pilot, so, you know, we
3 definitely know that there's a need there. I think
4 one of the challenges is, you know, when, for a job
5 where there's a lot of overtime, sometimes there's
6 not even necessarily time for those other things, so
7 we do need to reach out to them and really make an
8 effort to get them to use those resources.

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Thank you.

10 DCAS, do you all ever partner with
11 individual agencies to develop role-specific
12 retention incentives, particularly for those roles
13 identified as hard to recruit?

14 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, yes,
15 we're in constant communication with City agencies to
16 help them develop strategies to attract top talent.
17 One of those ways, of course, is through the
18 administration of examinations. Eighty percent of the
19 positions in City government require a civil service
20 examination. We release our annual examination
21 schedule on July 1st annually. However, the planning
22 for that schedule starts in January, so just a few
23 weeks ago we released our tentative examination
24 schedule, which includes titles that DCAS anticipates
25 being included on the schedule this year, and then we

2 send that schedule along with a workforce recruitment
3 survey, to City agencies to provide them with an
4 opportunity to review the titles that we're
5 anticipating and then to also share, you know, their
6 thoughts and ideas on titles that should be included
7 based on their hiring needs, and, you know, we go
8 back and forth with the agencies. We also meet with
9 agencies at their request to discuss any, you know,
10 special needs around the timing of the exam or, you
11 know, any specialized skill sets that may be needed
12 ahead of the exam schedule.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: And how often do
14 you update if the title is hard to recruit? How often
15 do you, like, review that designation?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Hard to
17 recruit, usually the agency will provide that
18 information to us and then we would review it at that
19 time.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Our Office of
22 Citywide Recruitment also works very closely with
23 agencies, conducting agency spotlights to our
24 community-based organizations and educational
25

2 institutions to highlight positions that may be hard
3 to recruit. Do you want to add anything?

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you for
5 that. My Colleagues and I have been concerned about
6 increasing wait times for ambulances and emergency
7 response teams to arrive on the scene of patients in
8 crisis. At the November hearing, held last year by
9 the Committee on Fire and Emergency Management,
10 Hospitals, and Oversight and Investigation, the
11 Administration emphasized that emergency responses
12 require incredible collaboration between 9-1-1
13 dispatchers, FDNY, EMS, EMT, and hospital staff. Does
14 DCAS play any role in the recruitment or examination
15 of 9-1-1 call dispatchers, EMS, EMT, or hospital
16 staff? And that's one part of the question. And then
17 while we recognize that there is a complicated
18 structure with all of these separate entities, it
19 would be helpful to understand what role if any DCAS
20 plays with any of these different groups.

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, DCAS'
22 role is to support these agencies by administering
23 examinations. Much of the titles that you mentioned,
24 with the exception of the hospital emergency room
25 title, are competitive titles in which DCAS

2 administers examinations and, once again, we request
3 feedback from agencies on how often they want to have
4 these titles. Many public safety titles we give
5 multiple times a year to support future recruitment
6 efforts.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. So, let's
8 go a little bit into the exam administration. Could
9 you please explain DCAS' role in collaborating with
10 agencies to determine which civil service exams will
11 be scheduled and what metrics factor into the joint
12 decision to administer this exam?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, once
14 again, our process starts in January, in which we...

15 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Sorry. I'm sorry,
16 Commissioner. We got to stop the hearing for one
17 second. Give us a second. I think it's the
18 translation. Just give us one second. I apologize.

19 Welcome to Monday at the City Council.
20 Okay. Sorry, Commissioner.

21 So, again, could you explain DCAS' role
22 in collaborating with agencies to determine what
23 civil service exams will be scheduled, what metrics
24 factor into the joint decision to administer these
25 exams?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: During the
3 planning process for the exam schedule in January, we
4 use data, right, so we look at titles that may have a
5 high number of provisionals, titles with eligible
6 lists that may be scheduled to expire within the next
7 year or two, and we come up with that tentative
8 schedule. It's really based on data and then, you
9 know, prior knowledge about titles that we give every
10 year. So, like public safety titles, police officer,
11 correction officer, probation officer, we give those
12 exams every year so they would automatically be
13 included on the tentative schedule. When we share
14 that tentative schedule with our agency partners, we
15 also send them what we call the Workforce Planning
16 Questionnaire, and their feedback in that
17 questionnaire is pretty much essential to shaping the
18 schedule to help them meet their current and future
19 hiring needs so it's a collaboration of data and the
20 Workforce Planning Questionnaire and feedback that we
21 get from the agencies, that's what determines what
22 titles we offer.

23 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. In past
24 hearing, you've spoken about the new practice of
25 administering the bridge exams, which allow

2 applicants to take one exam and apply for multiple
3 positions. As you discuss your upcoming year's
4 examination schedule with agencies, do you intend to
5 continue administering bridge exams? Has the feedback
6 on these exams been positive enough that you would
7 consider increasing the number of bridge exams
8 administered every year?

9 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Yes. So,
10 we've administered bridge exams every year since
11 Calendar Year 2019, and we have seen that there is
12 interest in this particular exam model. You know,
13 it's one exam, one application fee, it's a flat 40-
14 dollar rate for up to 10 examinations, and so we've
15 seen great success with this model and we do intend
16 to continue to administer bridge exams in the future.

17 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. According
18 to the 2024 Mayor's Management Report, it took
19 approximately 139 business days, around six months,
20 for DCAS to release exam results to applicants. As we
21 approach the release of the 2025 MMR, has DCAS made
22 any progress in reducing the time required and
23 process of releasing the exam scores, and has there
24 been any progress in reducing the time between the
25

2 release of an eligible list and the median time for
3 an applicant to be hired?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, I do want
5 to mention that our goal for exam administration is
6 290 days so we're well under our target for exam
7 establishments. We have seen some success in the
8 streamlining and fast-tracking exam establishment for
9 what we call single part exams. This is an exam that
10 just has one exam component, be it multiple choice or
11 education and experience. We've been able to get that
12 timeline down to about three to four months, and
13 we're always looking for opportunities to streamline
14 the exam development process so that we can get those
15 exams out more quickly.

16 It is important to mention that there are
17 legally mandated activities that need to happen, such
18 as the protest review session, that take time but, if
19 an agency has an immediate hiring need, we can work
20 with them to get them candidates before the list is
21 established.

22 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. I mean, I
23 think one of the things that always is surprising for
24 the Council and when we hear about the six-month
25 period is like, what kind of person can wait six

2 months, you know, to actually start working and the
3 economic hardships, right? You're already coming if
4 you if you weren't employed, if you were unemployed,
5 you're coming from a place where you haven't had
6 income and then you got to wait kind of six months,
7 you know, it would seem to me that we lose some
8 talent that can accept a job immediately in another
9 sector so, you know, that's always something that's
10 in the back of our heads as we think about the
11 process.

12 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So something
13 that I will mention is like if an agency has an
14 immediate hiring need, they have vacancies and they
15 don't have candidates and we just administered an
16 exam, we can provide them with data so that they can
17 start to engage with those candidates right away so
18 that they don't lose the top talent. The exam
19 schedule, though, it's a preemptive measure, right,
20 so these exams are for, you know, really for future
21 needs, but we are flexible in that way where we
22 provide agencies with data all the time to help them
23 fill their vacancies.

24 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. What is
25 the formula for the application fee? You know, one of

2 the things you testified to, I have the bill that
3 kind of waives the fee, and I understand like the
4 need to have you pay, even though I would argue that,
5 you know, I pay for the gym and I don't go, so it's
6 not always an incentive like you pay and you go, you
7 know, but I understand that we want people to be
8 responsible and, if they do put their resources
9 towards something, they're going to show up because
10 they're bought in, right, but what is the formula for
11 the fee? Where does the money generated by the
12 application fee go towards? One of the things
13 that we know is that, again, for an individual that
14 may not be employed, this could this could be a
15 barrier so I just want to learn a little bit more
16 about how the fees are determined. I think I saw
17 there was some tests that are like 68 dollars.
18 There's other tests that are 40 dollars. There's
19 different fees. So how do you determine what's the
20 fee per application?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, thank you
22 for that. I'll turn that over to Rob Alexander.

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ALEXANDER: Thank
24 you for that question. Thank you, Council Member. The
25 fee is part of our rules. The fee is determined by

2 the minimum lower salary, starting salary for that
3 position, so there's a chart that I believe begins at
4 40,000 up to over 100,000, with 40 being the least
5 and 101 being the highest salary. I think it was last
6 updated sometime in 2010.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. And you all
8 are, I mean, by your testimony, are finding that when
9 people pay, they generally show up.

10 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ALEXANDER: When
11 they pay a small fee, they come in much better
12 percentages when they do if they don't pay at all.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Would you
14 be open to reconsidering some of the application fees
15 or lowering them in the future for either all exams
16 or just for the titles that are experiencing high
17 vacancy rates at this time?

18 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, we're
19 always open to, you know, new ideas and suggestions
20 to help the City attract top talent. We do believe
21 that the bridge exam is one of those, you know, exam
22 types that allow a candidate to pay a fee, but to,
23 you know, get more bang for their buck by being
24 eligible for up to 10 exams.

2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: What's the fee
3 for the bridge again?

4 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: It's a 40-
5 dollar flat rate.

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay.

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: And then we
8 recently expanded this model for what we're calling
9 the public safety exam, which was recently open for
10 filing at the end of last year. So, you know, just
11 taking that model and continue to expand upon it so
12 that candidates, you know, have more opportunities to
13 be appointed from lists.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you. I want
15 to recognize that our Colleague Erik Bottcher is
16 here. Thank you.

17 I'd like to ask some questions regarding
18 some positions that are currently experiencing high
19 vacancy rates. We talked a little bit about school
20 safety agents. In September 2023, DCAS published a
21 notice of examination for school safety agents' exam
22 with a zero-dollar application fee with multiple
23 choice testing set to begin October 17th. By July
24 2024, the hiring list for those examinations was made
25 public on the City government website. Can you

2 provide an update on whether the Department of
3 Education has hired any of the individuals from the
4 eligible list and, if so, how many and what factors
5 have delayed the hiring process?

6 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So,
7 unfortunately, we do not have insight into agencies,
8 you know, hiring practices or how many folks are
9 being hired off of the civil service list. We would
10 have to reach out to them for that information.

11 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Is that
12 something that if you request they would share?

13 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Sure.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. If you
15 could help us get some of that information, that
16 would be great.

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: You said
18 school safety agent?

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yes, school
20 safety agents.

21 And then a similar exam for school safety
22 agents opened for application in May 2024 with
23 multiple choice testing to begin on August 15th,
24 2024, and again, in October 2024. Unlike the 2023
25 exam, which had no application fee, these exams

2 required a 54-dollar application fee. Can you explain
3 why the application fee was reinstated for the
4 subsequent test?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, that's a
6 great example of, you know, DCAS being flexible and
7 working with the agencies to, you know, try to
8 increase their candidate pool, and so we did
9 eliminate the application fee for the exam you
10 mentioned. So, while we received more applications,
11 we saw about a 50 percent drop off at the, you know,
12 for candidates coming in to sit for the exam, and
13 that is a resource constraint for our computerized
14 testing centers because we have to allocate a certain
15 number of seats to be available while we could have
16 been administering other exams so we did not find
17 that to be a successful strategy to increase the
18 number of test takers or passers for school safety
19 agent.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: I think I asked
21 earlier, but I don't know if I heard the response,
22 the fees that are generated, where does that money
23 go? Like, does it go into reinvestment for other
24 exams?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: They go into
3 the City's general fund. They do not come to DCAS
4 directly.

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. We were
6 unable to find a hiring list for the examinees who
7 took the exam in August 2024 or October 2024. Have
8 those exams been published yet? If not, when do you
9 expect the examinees can receive the results?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: And this is
11 school safety agent?

12 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yes.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ALEXANDER: Those
14 two that tested in August and October, they're
15 probably out by the end of February.

16 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: End of February.
17 Okay.

18 Okay, and for public safety positions,
19 asking a few questions on those, in addition to
20 school safety exam, we observed that several other
21 examinations for public safety positions were
22 announced last fall, including exams for probation
23 officers, police officers, correction officers, and
24 the level one public safety exam. Why was the
25 probation officer exam postponed, exam number 5129?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, yes, that
3 exam was postponed because we're working with the
4 Department of Probation on a qualification
5 requirement update, and so we wanted to ensure that
6 the update was completed before the exam opened for
7 filing. I believe that update is almost complete so
8 we will be engaging Department of Probation to get
9 the exam back on the schedule.

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. This seems
11 significant because as of December, Department of
12 Probation has an 18.5 vacancy rate with 200 positions
13 open, so do we think that once that qualification
14 review is done, we'll be able to fill some of those
15 positions?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Well,
17 actually, there's an active list for probation
18 officer with available candidates. So, Probation, you
19 know, can reach out to DCAS for certification and
20 we'll send them those names.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. The
22 multiple choice testing for the police officer exam
23 began on October 23, 2024. Has the eligible list for
24 that exam been released yet and, if not, when does
25 DCAS anticipate that it will be available?

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: That exam was
3 finalized and established on January 22nd, I believe.

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, it was
6 last week.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: The notice of
8 examination for the correction officer position
9 imposed a 68-dollar application fee. However, the
10 position's current minimum salary starts at 53,000
11 dollars a year. I believe that in past hearings, you
12 testified that the application fee is, you know,
13 based on the position's salary. Does this high
14 application fee seem to be commensurate with the
15 salary of a correction officer?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, I would
17 need to refer back to our, you know, criteria grid
18 just to confirm, you know, how that salary aligns
19 with the examination fee.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yeah, because it
21 seems a little high.

22 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: As
23 Commissioner Alexander mentioned, it's usually tied
24 to the lowest starting salary for the title.

25 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yeah.

2 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: But we can
3 look into it.

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: It seems a little
5 high because if the starting salary is 53,000 and
6 that fee is almost 70 dollars, it just seems a little
7 high. Does the Level One public safety exam act as a
8 bridge exam for public safety roles across several
9 titles?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Public safety
11 bridge is similar to the bridge exam. However, there
12 will only be one resulting list from the examination.
13 So, it's one exam, one application fee, multiple
14 titles, but one list.

15 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay.

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: And really
17 the idea behind the public safety bridge exam is to
18 help supplement exams that are already being
19 administered for the standalone titles.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. And are you
21 finding in your experience that agencies are able to
22 easily access and pull people off the list?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, this is a
24 pilot program. We just had the multiple choice test
25 earlier this month so the list has not been

2 established yet, but we're hopeful to be able to use
3 this, you know, for future iterations of this model.

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. More to
5 talk about once we figure out how it works. Okay.

6 So, moving into service delivery, how are
7 staffing reductions impacting service delivery across
8 critical areas, and what measures are being
9 implemented to mitigate these effects?

10 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Once again,
11 Chair, we don't have insight into agency hiring
12 practices, but I can tell you at DCAS, we are using,
13 you know, strategies like targeted recruitment events
14 and leveraging civil service pathway fellowship to
15 ensure that we have, you know, enough resources so
16 that we're not affecting service delivery.

17 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Are there
18 any job titles, particularly those related to social
19 services or public safety or healthcare, that have
20 been experiencing high rates of attrition?

21 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: I don't have
22 that information handy today.

23 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. If you
24 could get back to the Committee, that would be great.

2 What key performance indicators does DCAS
3 use to evaluate the success of its hiring and
4 retention initiatives?

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, through
6 the MMR, we have quite a few indicators there, but
7 one that we use, you know, absolutely is the time
8 between exam administration and exam establishment.
9 Because we do recognize that, you know, that the time
10 that it takes for us to complete those examinations,
11 you know, may affect, you know, agency's ability in
12 some cases.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. I'd like to
14 recognize that we've been joined by Council Member
15 Julie Menin and also Public Advocate Williams is
16 here.

17 Is there a timeline or a benchmark in
18 place for reducing vacancy rates in the hardest-hit
19 agencies? Do you have an internal timeline?

20 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: We do not.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Is there a
22 reason why?

23 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Because those
24 strategies happen at the agency level, you know, so
25 they'll reach out to us for support, but we really

2 don't have a line of sight into their hiring
3 practices.

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay.

5 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: Individual
6 agency hiring practices.

7 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. I'm going
8 to pause my questions for a minute because I know
9 that Public Advocate Williams wants to testify on his
10 bill. Welcome, Public Advocate.

11 PUBLIC ADVOCATE WILLIAMS: Thank you so
12 much, Madam Chair. Really appreciate it. Welcome,
13 everyone. Thank you for giving me an opportunity.

14 As was mentioned, my name is Jumaane
15 Williams. I'm Public Advocate of the City of New
16 York. Thank you to Chair De La Rosa and Members of
17 the Committee on Civil Service and Labor for holding
18 this hearing and for allowing me to share my
19 statement, which we call it an opening statement, but
20 it's kind of in the middle now. Today I'm speaking on
21 support of Resolution 0333-24, which reintroduced
22 this legislative session. The Resolution calls on New
23 York State Legislature to pass and the Governor to
24 sign State Senate Bill S-28 by Senator Skoufis and
25 its companion State Assembly Bill A-1006,

2 Assemblymember Steck. It would eliminate the
3 subminimum wage for employees based on their
4 disability or age. The bill goes as far back as 2017
5 and has been reintroduced every session since it is a
6 matter of equity that the State of New York needs to
7 address. It is time the State Legislature gets it to
8 the finish line, and I urge my Colleagues to support
9 the resolution for its passage. Presently, there are
10 provisions outlined by the Fair Labor Standards Act,
11 FLSA, that provides for the employment of individuals
12 with disabilities at wage rates below the statutory
13 minimum, otherwise known as minimum wage. The intent
14 of such a provision is to prevent employers from
15 deciding against the hiring of individuals based on
16 characteristics such as having a disability.
17 Employers could receive a subminimum wage certificate
18 from the Wage and Hour Division of the Department of
19 Labor. Despite an effort to encourage the hiring of
20 individuals with disabilities, the real-life
21 application of the provision still leads to major pay
22 discrepancies and unfair treatment in the workplace.
23 According to the United States Government
24 Accountability Office, since 2019, more than half of
25 workers employed by organizations possessing a

1 subminimum wage certificate earn less than \$3.50 an
2 hour. In a report from NBC News, Goodwill Industries
3 paid some workers with disabilities as little as
4 \$0.22 an hour, a brazen abuse of a legal loophole in
5 the FLSA and a showcase of how the company
6 undervalues its workers. Senate Bill S-28, Assembly
7 Bill A-1006 would eliminate these provisions,
8 allowing New York to finally join the 18 other states
9 that have passed legislation that has or will end
10 subminimum wage work for people with disabilities.
11 The legislation would also impact both New York City
12 and State, as both have a significant population of
13 residents living with disabilities. Approximately 11
14 percent of the City's total population live with some
15 type of disability, and approximately 26 percent of
16 adults in the State live with disabilities.
17 Researchers estimate that there are around 1,400
18 workers paid a subminimum wage with a large portion
19 of them classified as individuals with disabilities.
20 The FLSA is more than 85 years old, and with it come
21 provisions that may be arguably antiquated. Enacted
22 during the middle of World War II, the FLSA went to
23 effect when the country experienced financial
24 constraints and a shortage of then-current workforce
25

2 because of the draft for military service. While the
3 intent of the subminimum wage was to ensure job
4 opportunities for people with disabilities, it does
5 not entirely account for the loopholes employers will
6 go through to pay employees as little as possible for
7 their work. Everyone deserves to seek and obtain
8 dignified employment and be compensated fairly. It's
9 time New York steps up and rids itself of this nearly
10 century-old ableist provision and ask my Colleagues
11 to support the Resolution to push our State
12 Legislatures to do so. Thank you, Chair, for hearing
13 this piece of legislation as well. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you for
15 putting forward an important legislation we certainly
16 support. Thank you.

17 Okay, so I have a bunch of questions.
18 Bear with us. And this line of questioning has to do
19 with reports that have been recently sent to the
20 Council by DCAS in the last few months, and so we
21 want to dig in a little bit to some of the
22 information in those reports. The first one is the
23 Civil Service Ambassador Program, Local Law 2 of
24 2023. At the end of 2024, we received the report on
25 the Civil Service Ambassador Program. This report

2 requires DCAS' Office of Citywide Recruitment to
3 report on various education and outreach efforts that
4 the Department has engaged in at the civil service
5 pathways across the city during the prior fiscal
6 year. We're very appreciative of the work you did to
7 promote public service work at these events and just
8 wanted to touch base on some of the most interesting
9 points that we saw in the report on FY24. We noted
10 that a key area of growth was the type of forums at
11 which you conducted outreach events, particularly the
12 inclusion of shelters and trade schools. However,
13 while there were increases in events held at the
14 adult workforce and career training programs, we
15 noticed a significant reduction in the events held at
16 youth workforce and career training programs, going
17 from 20 events in 2023 to only three events in 2024.
18 Could you explain why the amount of outreach done at
19 those events was significantly impacted?

20 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OUTAR: Thank you
21 for that question and I'm glad that you had an
22 opportunity to review the report. When we think about
23 the outreach that we need to do for Local Law 2 and
24 all of the other local laws, we try to be very
25 targeted in our outreach and look at where there were

2 gaps and try to shore up on them. Kind of, if I can
3 explain the process of us engaging communities, the
4 team does a lot of research to identify
5 organizations, schools, drop-in centers, and folks
6 that we can connect with. Then they start the process
7 by reaching out and sending, you know, initial
8 emails, we're DCAS, this is what we do, we'd love to
9 communicate with you. Sometimes we get responses that
10 are right away, yay, I'm interested. Other times it
11 may take several follow-ups. And so we try to make
12 sure that we're always reaching out and engaging, and
13 so while there may be a dip in the youth workforce,
14 that may be an increase because now we're identifying
15 and working with schools and now we are increasing
16 the outreach that we're doing in other areas.
17 Sometimes it's also dependent on when folks reach out
18 to us. So, we always try to make sure that we're
19 hitting all of the different populations. But it's a
20 challenge sometimes in terms of, you know, sticking
21 to one particular population.

22 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay, got it. In
23 the table where the civil service pathway engagement
24 events are laid out, we note that some events are
25 labeled as other, signifying events held in

2 partnership with other City agencies and community
3 boards. Could you please elaborate on the types of
4 events you conducted with City agencies or community
5 boards? Were they hiring halls or educational
6 outreach events?

7 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OUTAR: So, it
8 could be listed as both. We don't necessarily include
9 hiring halls or career fairs where we're not
10 conducting civil service one-on-one sessions in this
11 report because of the requirements of the report. But
12 for example, it could be the Department of Youth and
13 Community Development. For their summer youth
14 employment program, we will do information sessions
15 for them. We would do City talk panels for them. We
16 do different information sessions. For the community
17 boards, we may go out and do an information session
18 for them. So, that's why we include them under the
19 other category.

20 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. The report
21 specifies that the outreach events that were held
22 across the five boroughs were not necessarily
23 consistent. For example, Manhattan and Brooklyn had
24 14 events each, while Staten Island only had three.
25 The report describes the discrepancy as being due to

2 challenges in the first half of the fiscal year. But
3 could you please elaborate on what those challenges
4 were? While we recognize that there are definitely
5 preferences for virtual presentations or limitations
6 based on partner organizations, I feel that it is
7 unlikely that our neighbors in Staten Island have
8 such an overwhelming preference for virtual events or
9 other events that don't fall under the purview of the
10 ambassador program when compared to residents in the
11 other four boroughs to merit like the steep
12 discrepancy described.

13 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OUTAR: Yes. Thank
14 you. And so it also goes to the outreach and the
15 responsiveness of those outreach, so we have
16 different staff members that are responsible for
17 reaching out to different boroughs, and they all are
18 very intentional in reaching out to whether it's
19 schools, whether it's organizations. Sometimes it's
20 the responsiveness of those organizations. We found
21 that in the previous year report, we had a low
22 representation in the Bronx or Staten Island so we
23 increased our outreach there and, as a result, you
24 will see it's always going to be a shift because we
25 have to figure out where do we need to go so you may

2 see an increase in the Bronx but a decrease in
3 Manhattan because we're trying to figure out the best
4 place for us to be, but what the team has been doing
5 is figuring out more creative ways to reach out to
6 different communities. So we always have to, is it
7 schools? CUNY schools, they were an issue. So now we
8 ramped up that effort. Where are the CUNY schools in
9 Staten Island? There may be only one. You may see
10 additional ones in Queens or in the Bronx. So, the
11 team is very intentional in their outreach. Staten
12 Island, we are on it. Actually, the team right now
13 has a couple of events that they're planning,
14 including one, I wrote the Council Member's name here
15 but I can't find it now, but we're doing one in March
16 with the Council Member from Staten Island at the
17 Staten Island Borough Hall so we are actively
18 reaching out.

19 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. And if the
20 Committee could ever be helpful, you know, we got to
21 refer our Staten Island Colleagues because then they
22 want to recede and that's a problem so we want them
23 to stay.

24 So, the Public Service Corps Program
25 Local Law 4 of 2023. At our previous Civil Service

2 and Labor hearing that we held jointly with Council
3 Member Dinowitz and the Committee on Higher Education
4 in late October, we were awaiting DCAS' report on the
5 Public Service Corps. We received the report in mid-
6 December and would appreciate if you could answer
7 some questions reflecting on its content. The report
8 states that you had 116 PSC interns who were placed
9 in FY 2024 and that it successfully recruited
10 students from diverse backgrounds and from a variety
11 of academic institutions. Of the 116 interns who were
12 placed, 40 were placed in DCAS and 54 were placed in
13 HRA, while most of the other participating
14 Departments only placed one to five interns. Is there
15 a reason why such an overwhelming majority of
16 students were placed at DCAS and HRA? Was it based on
17 need for interns or are you better situated to offer
18 experiential learning opportunities? What was the
19 reason for the kind of differences in agency
20 participation?

21 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OUTAR: Thank you.

22 For the DCAS part, we have to champion the work that
23 we're doing, right? But we are really doing outreach
24 to all of the agencies to engage them in
25 participating in the program, and so they are

2 encouraged to share job descriptions to us. They're
3 encouraged to utilize the program to alleviate some
4 of their staff and needs that they have. We also look
5 at, with the schools that we're engaging, the
6 location of them so sometimes depending on where the
7 school is located and where the agency is located.
8 Within DCAS, there may be opportunities that are
9 centralized in Manhattan and you'll have a lot of
10 schools that are central in Manhattan. Within the
11 Department of Social Services, they may have
12 opportunities that are across different boroughs, and
13 so that allows us to engage schools and students that
14 are within different boroughs. Because these students
15 go to school and they come in 20 hours, so it would
16 be hard for them to trek from Queens to come to a
17 position in Manhattan so we try to factor all of
18 that, but know that we have to make intentional
19 outreach to both the schools and the agencies so we
20 can bridge that gap.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: And you're
22 encouraging agencies to participate, I'm assuming?

23 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OUTAR: Absolutely,
24 yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: We saw in the
3 report that you had launched the Public Service Corps
4 Intern Hire Expo in the summer and fall of 2024 and
5 successfully filled 28 internship roles. Do you
6 foresee an expansion of this program in the future
7 and, of the students who completed their internships,
8 do they have a pipeline for entering civil service in
9 the future after they obtain degrees for
10 undergraduate or graduate school?

11 ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OUTAR: Yeah, so we
12 are definitely going to be hosting that event yearly.
13 We are planning one for this coming spring because we
14 saw the benefit for both the students as well as the
15 agencies. And the pathways for students is making
16 sure that they understand the process. They're coming
17 in as an intern, if you're working for DCAS, we
18 currently hire PSC interns as well within our team,
19 then they know about the opportunities that are
20 available. They're getting information on the civil
21 service process, the examination process. These are
22 students that can also go into the Civil Service
23 Pathways Fellowships and other opportunities. So
24 while they are on-boarded to the City, they're being
25

2 provided with information on how they can kind of
3 navigate the system.

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Great. Thank you
5 for answering that.

6 I'm going to pass it to Council Member
7 Bottcher, who has a few questions, and then I'll wrap
8 with just some questions on my bill.

9 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Hi. According to
10 the Office of the New York City Comptroller, the NYPD
11 has a vacancy rate of 4.6 percent. The NYPD is
12 currently operating at a staffing level that's below
13 what's been allocated in its budget by the City
14 Council. To what factors do you attribute the 4.6
15 percent vacancy rate?

16 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So DCAS works
17 very closely with the NYPD to discuss, you know, any
18 potential staffing issues or concerns, and we usually
19 support them through the administration of civil
20 service exams. Many of the public safety titles that
21 the NYPD uses are offered multiple times a year. So,
22 for instance, police officer, we offer it three times
23 a year. School safety agent, traffic enforcement
24 agent, two to three times a year. And so we support
25 them in that way. Speaking directly to the percentage

2 of the vacancy rate, we're not at liberty to do that
3 today.

4 COUNCIL MEMBER BOTTCHEER: Based on your
5 experience, is the 4.6 percent vacancy rate for the
6 NYPD low, average, or high?

7 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, I can't
8 speak to that today, sir. We can definitely look into
9 it and get back to you with a more definitive answer.

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you,
11 Council Member.

12 All right. So on my Intro. 671, how does
13 DCAS anticipate that a fee waiver could improve
14 access to civil service opportunities for
15 underrepresented groups and economically
16 disadvantaged communities?

17 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: So, we do
18 recognize the importance of fee waivers. We offer fee
19 waivers for many different populations, such as folks
20 who receive Medicaid, public assistance. If you're
21 unemployed, you can receive a fee waiver. So, as I
22 mentioned in my testimony, we do agree with the
23 intent of the bill. We're just concerned that, you
24 know, based on our experience with reducing fee

2 waivers, you know, that folks will apply, but that
3 they won't actually show up to take the examination.

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. Does DCAS
5 have data or research showing how examination fees
6 have previously acted as a barrier for potential
7 applicants?

8 DEPUTY COMMISSIONER PORTER: What I can
9 tell you is that approximately 20 percent of
10 candidates who apply for our exams receive a fee
11 waiver. They request, and we approve a fee waiver.

12 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. 20 percent.
13 All right. We'll keep chatting about how to make it
14 work.

15 Thank you so much for your testimony, and
16 thank you for being here today.

17 All right. I now open the floor to public
18 testimony. Before we begin, I want to remind members
19 of the public that this is a formal government
20 proceeding, and the decorum shall be observed at all
21 times. As such, members of the public shall remain
22 silent at all times.

23 The witness table is reserved for people
24 who wish to testify. No video recording or
25 photography is allowed from the witness table.

2 Further, members of the public may not present audio
3 or video recordings as testimony but may submit
4 transcripts of such recording to the Sergeant-at-Arms
5 for inclusion in the hearing record.

6 If you wish to speak at today's hearing,
7 please fill out an appearance card with the Sergeant-
8 at-Arms and wait for your name to be called. Once you
9 have been recognized, you will have three minutes to
10 speak on today's hearing topic regarding Methods to
11 Improve Retention in the City Workforce.

12 If you have a written statement or
13 additional written testimony you wish to submit for
14 the record, please provide a copy of the testimony to
15 the Sergeant-at-Arms. You may also email written
16 testimony to testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72
17 hours of the hearing. Audio and video recordings will
18 not be accepted.

19 We will start our public testimony with
20 Mr. Oren Barzilay on Zoom. Please wait for the
21 Sergeants to indicate that you may begin.

22 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: You may begin.

23 OREN BARZILAY: Hello, Council Members.
24 Thank you for inviting me and asking me to speak
25 today. I do not have a written testimony. However, I

2 do want to speak about the improper hiring process
3 that is ongoing in our city. I truly believe that OLR
4 and OMB has blood on their hands. They are constantly
5 violating federal laws by discriminatory pay
6 practices. As you know, we in EMS are extremely
7 underpaid. 39,000 DOLLARS a year for EMTs and
8 paramedics is their starting salary. They are
9 constantly violating the law. They're offering what's
10 called pattern bargaining. OLR should be disbanded or
11 the people that are in there should be replaced. They
12 offer every city employee 16 percent increases
13 regardless of how much you make so somebody who's
14 making 100,000 dollars and getting 16 percent is
15 getting a significant increase. Some people like me
16 and my folks who are earning 39,000 dollars a year
17 are also getting 16 percent, so the gap keeps growing
18 year after year. Hence, why EMS is constantly
19 understaffed, constantly a revolving door. Nobody
20 stays here. Starting in May of this year, in three
21 months from now, within a year period, I'm going to
22 lose almost 30 percent of my members as they are
23 leaving to another department in the city. The Fire
24 Department is now scrambling on how to replace these
25 people because they are going to become firefighters

2 earning six figures compared to 39,000 dollars a
3 year. So, you know, I've been testifying about this
4 for years. We actually have a federal lawsuit ongoing
5 with the City for discriminatory pay practice, and
6 this will keep on going until they fix this problem.
7 You know, the gentleman from OLR who said that they
8 charge unions 0.5 for equity pay, why are you
9 charging the unions or its members for a raise? Where
10 is that heard of? Anywhere else you go in the
11 country, nobody's getting charged for a raise. Every
12 time we ask for something, it's no. They gave the
13 police alarm dispatchers, the police dispatchers, a
14 10,000-dollar bonus incentive to keep them employed.
15 We asked for the same thing in our contract that's
16 ongoing now, we're without a contract for three
17 years, and they denied us. Every time we ask for
18 something, OLR and OMB says no. I don't have much
19 further to say other than it's a disgrace and I'll
20 take any questions you have.

21 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so
22 much, Oren. We've met offline before, and I will
23 reiterate to you our commitment to getting this right
24 when it comes to our EMS EMT workforce. I recognize
25 the inequity and the unfairness that your workforce

2 has had to contend for years, and I remain committed
3 to continuing to work with you on this issue so more
4 to come and I really appreciate you taking the time
5 to come here and to speak about this discrepancy,
6 this unfair treatment that this workforce that is so
7 important, right? If anyone has been in an ambulance,
8 we understand the importance of this workforce and
9 you all should be compensated as such so I really
10 appreciate you taking the time.

11 OREN BARZILAY: I appreciate you as well.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Okay. So, now we
14 will turn to in-person testimony. When you hear your
15 name, please come up to the witness panel.

16 For the first panel, we invite Dalvanie
17 Powell, Megan Chambers, Gerber Archila, and Jeilin
18 Montes. Sorry if I messed up your name, correct it on
19 the record. Thank you.

20 We can begin. Just identify yourself for
21 the record when you start to speak, and I know that
22 we have some folks on the panel that need
23 translation, so we will take care of that as well.
24 Okay. You may begin.

25 DALVANIE POWELL: Good afternoon.

2 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Good afternoon.

3 DALVANIE POWELL: Good afternoon, Chair De
4 La Rosa and esteemed Members of the Committee. Thank
5 you for the opportunity to testify today on a
6 critical issue of workforce retention at the New York
7 City Department of Probation. My name is Dalvanie K.
8 Powell, and I serve as the President of the United
9 Probation Officers Association representing nearly
10 700 supervising probation officers, probation officer
11 trainees, and probation assistants. Our members are
12 predominantly women and people of color who work
13 tirelessly to uphold public safety while helping
14 keeping individuals rebuild their lives. Becoming a
15 probation officer requires a bachelor's degree and
16 two years of experience or a master's degree. We are
17 peace officers trained alongside police and
18 correctional officers authorized to carry firearms,
19 make arrests, and perform essential public safety
20 duties. Yet, despite our critical role in providing
21 an alternative to incarceration, saving the City and
22 State millions of dollars, our compensation lags
23 significantly behind that of NYPD, Corrections, and
24 even probation officers in surrounding counties like
25 Suffolk County, Nassau County, and Westchester. Over

the past six years, staffing levels at DOP have dropped significantly. In 2018, headcount was 832. Today, that number has gone down to 645. This decline has been driven by an alarming rate of attrition. In 2023 alone, 103 members resigned, 32 retired, 28 terminated. In 2024, these numbers included 78 resignations and 25 retirements, and they continue to go down. With fewer officers on the job, caseloads have soared, pushing the remaining workforce to the brink. Retention challenges extend beyond low wages. The current Department administration has implemented policies and practices that have exacerbated the crisis. The removal of caseloads from probation officer trainees despite severe staffing shortages is one such misstep. Additionally, the Department is planning to disband court liaison officer units and replace them with higher paid attorneys disregarding UPOA's warnings about violations of bargaining rights. Family court staffing has been cut by 40 percent or more at a time when juvenile cases have risen under the Raise the Age initiative, further straining resources. Meanwhile, hiring efforts have stalled. Three academy classes and crucial exams canceled, resulting in only 57 new retirees during a

time of critical need. Unrealistic demands on staff have also intensified, including extensive documentation, time tracking requirements, coupled with discouragement of necessary adjournment despite overwhelming caseloads. These policies not only hinder productivity but also contribute to low morale. Furthermore, punitive disciplinary measures have replaced progressive discipline, creating an environment of fear and intimidation. Direct interference with UPOA members by management following the union's raised concerns has further eroded trust between staff and leadership. We strongly support Intro. 671, which will waive the civil service exam fee for first time applicants and high school students... (TIMER CHIME) if you allow me, removing financial barriers to entry to a positive step toward addressing recruitment challenges across civil service agencies, including the DOP. However, this is just one piece of the puzzle. Retention requires a work environment founded on respect, dignity, and professionalism. To stabilize the DOP, leadership must collaborate with unions to address staffing workload issues, develop realistic plans for hiring and training, and create pathways for career

2 growth while prioritizing institutional knowledge.
3 Policies that support rather than undermine the
4 workforce are essential for building a substantial
5 agency. DOP is at its breaking point, and immediate
6 action is necessary to prevent further deterioration
7 to ensure the Department can continue in its critical
8 mission. Thank you for your attention. I'm happy to
9 answer any questions. I'm sorry.

10 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: No, it's okay.
11 Thank you so much. I'm going to ask you some
12 questions, but let's hear from the rest of the panel,
13 and then I'll come back. You may start.

14 MEGAN CHAMBERS: Okay. Good afternoon.
15 We're very glad to be here. My name is Megan
16 Chambers, and I am co-manager of the Labor Union, the
17 Laundry Distribution and Food Service Joint Board,
18 Workers United, SEIU. Our union represents 7,500
19 frontline service workers in and around New York
20 City, including more than 3,000 industrial laundry
21 workers. On behalf of our union, I'm speaking to
22 express our strong support for Resolution No. 598.
23 Thank you to Chair De La Rosa for introducing this
24 very important Resolution, and thank you for the

2 entire Committee for listening to us today about this
3 urgent and important issue.

4 Union co-manager Alberto Arroyo is also
5 here today to express support, along with quite a few
6 of our members, as many as we could fit in the back
7 row. I'm not going to go over every word of our
8 testimony. We have submitted written testimony, but
9 just in brief, industrial laundry companies use
10 factory-type equipment to launder thousands of pounds
11 per hour of sheets, towels, tablecloths, and other
12 washables used by New York City businesses and
13 institutions. Our union and its members who work in
14 industrial laundries have fought really hard for
15 decades to establish fair standards for workers in
16 this sector, and we are really proud to say that
17 almost all industrial laundry companies that service
18 businesses in New York City abide by those standards.
19 One of the big users of industrial laundry products
20 in the city is the healthcare sector, hospitals,
21 nursing homes, and there is one company that is an
22 outlier that refuses to comply with area standards,
23 and it is critical that this company and anybody who
24 wants to follow in their footsteps be reined in, and
25 that's what this Resolution does. So, the company I'm

2 talking about is a company called FDR Services Corp.

3 There are shockingly bad working conditions there.

4 This company is a serial lawbreaker that over the

5 past seven-plus years has flagrantly violated

6 workers' rights and area standards for industrial

7 laundry workers. The Resolution works to put an end

8 to those kinds of abuses by calling on New York City

9 hospitals and nursing homes to make sure that they

10 are using contractors that respect workers' rights,

11 follow the law, and adhere to area standards. FDR

12 Services employs around 175 workers, mostly

13 immigrants and women, and they are members of our

14 union, but they do not enjoy the standards that the

15 rest of the membership enjoy because FDR Services for

16 more than seven years has refused to sign a successor

17 union contract, so they don't have a signed contract,

18 and has denied them their quality union health

19 insurance. (TIMER CHIME) So, there's a list attached

20 to our testimony of the many legal violations at FDR

21 Services. The workers deserve better, and our New

22 York City hospitals and nursing homes deserve to be

23 using quality providers, trustworthy providers, so

24 this resolution protects everyone, and we hope it

25

2 will get your unqualified support of this Committee.
3 Thank you so much.

4 GERBER ARCHILA: I'm sorry, I speak
5 Spanish.

6 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: You don't have to
7 apologize. (SPEAKING SPANISH)

8 GERBER ARCHILA: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

9 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: (SPEAKING
10 SPANISH)

11 GERBER ARCHILA: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

12 INTERPRETER: Good afternoon. My name is
13 Gerber Archila. I am a member of the Workers' Union,
14 and I also work in a laundry in New York.

15 GERBER ARCHILA: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

16 INTERPRETER: Thanks for the opportunity
17 to let me participate in this public hearing. I'm
18 here to support my brothers and sisters who are
19 working for FDR Services. We are speaking on behalf
20 of this important Resolution for all of us.

21 GERBER ARCHILA: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

22 INTERPRETER: It's incredible to hear that
23 this company, FDR, is being so irresponsible with its
24 own employees and, not only this, we should not let

2 this company do bad things to our employees here in
3 the company.

4 GERBER ARCHILA: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

5 INTERPRETER: This is not only an abuse to
6 his own workers, but it's also a lack of respect to
7 his own employees and also to the people who are
8 senior citizens, including the hospitals and also
9 senior citizen centers who have contracts with this
10 company FDR.

11 GERBER ARCHILA: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

12 INTERPRETER: The workers of FDR who are
13 working in the same laundromats and working, right,
14 should have the same rights that we have. Yeah. They
15 should have at least a minimum amount of benefits,
16 and also they should be able to carry a good health
17 insurance, a good health insurance that we will be
18 able to use. Thousands of workers that are working in
19 these laundry places and laundromats in the area, and
20 they're also covered by the union.

21 GERBER ARCHILA: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

22 INTERPRETER: It's the time to demonstrate
23 to FDR that this behavior then is not acceptable for
24 anyone here in the City of New York. Thanks to all of
25 you, and also to the Council Lady, Carmen de la Rosa,

2 for all her support, and all the Members of the NYC
3 Council Committee. Thank you so much to give me this
4 opportunity to testify, and thank you for all your
5 help.

6 INTERPRETER: Just one thing. He's
7 representing another employee, right? Her name is
8 Jeilin Montes, right? Her daughter got sick today so
9 she couldn't come to testify in person so he's acting
10 as the representative of her.

11 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: (SPEAKING
12 SPANISH)

13 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

14 INTERPRETER: My name is Jeilin Montes.
15 I'm a member of the union and shop steward for the
16 Union of Workers United. Thank you for the
17 opportunity to speak in favor of this important
18 Resolution for all of us.

19 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

20 INTERPRETER: I'm working in the
21 industrial laundry, FDR services, located in
22 Hempstead, New York.

23 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

24

25

2 INTERPRETER: We are washing clothing for
3 many hospitals and also senior citizen centers
4 located in the New York City area.

5 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

6 INTERPRETER: This company in the last
7 seven years has refused to negotiate a fair labor
8 contract for all of us, and we have been without a
9 good health insurance for the last years.

10 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

11 INTERPRETER: During the last seven years,
12 we have been victims, we have suffered a lot of abuse
13 done by the company, FDR, to us.

14 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

15 INTERPRETER: Here are some examples of
16 this abuse. They fired many of our workmates only for
17 the fact they were trying to exercise their rights
18 about this abuse. Thanks to the Union and thanks to
19 the National Labor Relations Board, right, they were
20 able to come back to work and they also pay for the
21 stolen salaries, money that was stolen from them when
22 they were working there, so they recovered this
23 through the National Labor Relations Board.

24 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

2 INTERPRETER: This company was fined by
3 OSHA because of health violations and also violations
4 of safety to all the workers in the company.

5 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

6 INTERPRETER: This company was so cynic
7 that they fired some of their workers, some of the
8 employees, only for the fact that during the COVID-19
9 pandemic, they couldn't come to work, right, only
10 because they were sick with COVID-19 and they still
11 fired them. Thanks to the Labor Union and thanks to
12 the Office of Attorney General, Letitia James, these
13 workers were allowed to come back to work, and they
14 also recovered the stolen salaries, the money they
15 had stole from them when they were working in these
16 places.

17 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

18 INTERPRETER: We, the workers, we
19 surrendered a document petition to FDR. The only
20 intention of this document was for them to sign the
21 same labor contract, including the same benefits, the
22 good health insurance that they have with the union
23 and that other places, people who were working in
24 other laundries, industrial laundries, had signed and
25 they were able to use, right, this insurance because

2 of this, and FDR never gave us a response about this.
3 They never gave us any response.

4 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

5 INTERPRETER: It's the moment to let FDR
6 know that they cannot continue doing whatever they
7 want or whatever they are pleased with their own
8 employees. This is not fair.

9 JEILIN MONTES: (SPEAKING SPANISH)

10 INTERPRETER: In the name of all my
11 workmates that work with me, I wanted to say thank
12 you to our Councilwoman Carmen De La Rosa and not
13 only to her but also to all the Members of the NYC
14 Council Committee for all your support and to give us
15 the opportunity to be here to testify in the day of
16 today. Thank you very much to all of you.

17 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you all for
18 being here. I do have a few questions. (SPEAKING
19 SPANISH) Let me start my questioning with Dalvanie.
20 Thank you so much for being here, Ms. Powell. As you
21 noticed, we did ask the question to DCAS around the
22 vacancy rates at the Department of Probation, which
23 the information we have before us is that the vacancy
24 rate is currently 18.5 percent vacancy. There's 200
25 job vacancies right now. The response that we got was

2 that the Department of Probation is currently
3 undergoing a qualification review. Has that
4 information been given to the union in terms of a
5 qualification review?

6 DALVANIE POWELL: We met with DCAS a
7 couple of weeks ago, me and my attorney, regarding
8 this bridge program they were telling us about, which
9 I'm not too thrilled about. Okay, so that's another
10 conversation. But they mentioned, Katrina mentioned
11 about the requalifications. I'm still trying to
12 figure out what is that going to look like. But what
13 was the question again?

14 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: So, my question
15 was has the Department notified the union that the
16 reason why the exam was postponed is because of a
17 requalification?

18 DALVANIE POWELL: No, I found out through
19 meeting with Mr. Molina and Katrina, but the
20 Department never mentioned it to us. I was kind of
21 surprised that another exam was canceled again.

22 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Well, let's
23 follow up offline on the situation and, yeah, that
24 was my question because I wanted to kind of see if
25

2 the communication between the Department and the
3 union was.

4 DALVANIE POWELL: We'll talk.

5 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Yeah, we'll talk
6 offline.

7 Okay, and then to the laundry workers,
8 thank you for being here. (SPEAKING SPANISH) I want
9 to express my solidarity with you all. I'm looking
10 forward to passing this Resolution. Part of the work
11 of the Committee has been to call out unscrupulous
12 employers in our city that want to play with people's
13 lives, their livelihoods, and their wages and, you
14 know, I know that all of you are hardworking. The
15 work that you do is important. And if any of you have
16 been in a hospital, we know that you want clean
17 garments when you are in that state, and the fact
18 that you are the ones that provide it means that the
19 work that you do is important for the health and care
20 of our city so I want to thank you for your service
21 and let you know that we intend to pass this
22 Resolution in the Council, and we look forward to
23 continuing to defend your rights to live and work in
24 our city. (SPEAKING SPANISH) I thank you all for
25 coming.

2 INTERPRETER: Thank you so much. We really
3 appreciate it. (SPEAKING SPANISH)

4 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you. We
5 have one more panelist. Up next, we'll hear from
6 Christopher Leon Johnson. You may begin when you're
7 ready.

8 CHRISTOPHER LEON JOHNSON: Yeah, I'm
9 ready. Hi, my name is Christopher Leon Johnson. Thank
10 you, Chair, for hosting this hearing. We're here to
11 support the Resolutions to protect the laundry
12 workers. I believe that they need more protections
13 from their work. I just hope that very soon that
14 retail laundry workers get added to the union too,
15 other than just industrial laundry workers. I want to
16 talk about employee retention. How you can save
17 employee retention in the City workforce is by
18 basically removing certain provisions in City
19 employment such as removing, when it comes to
20 political, doing politics on the job. Basically, you
21 got to remove certain things when it comes to
22 moonlighting on the job. I believe that people
23 should, to protect things going down in the city, you
24 need City workers to be with the people. Because
25 remember, they can vote too. When it comes to the

2 Intro. for DCAS, when it comes to employee fees,
3 making sure people pay for dues to work. I mean,
4 they'll do a test for teenagers, high schoolers, and
5 first-time applicants. Yeah, that should be waived. I
6 mean nobody should be paying fees, especially if you
7 don't have a job, or it's hard to get a job. I
8 believe that instead of the first time, you should
9 get three times. If you fail three times, then you
10 pay. The City has enough money to waive 70-dollar
11 fees for the people that want to work. Basically, not
12 only do you need to waive fees for the high schoolers
13 and first-time applicants, you need to waive fees for
14 anybody that makes less than the 30 percent AMI
15 poverty rate. People that make less than lower
16 poverty ranges, they should be able to pay any fees.
17 But going back to this laundry worker thing, laundry
18 worker stuff. These guys and gals need a lot of
19 protections on the workforce. I know this year,
20 hopefully this union should be fighting back against
21 retaliation on the workforce. Especially right now,
22 where we have this President in the White House,
23 Donald Trump. I know so many guys here are migrants,
24 immigrants. We got to start educating these guys and
25 gals about if they want to file complaints to the

2 bosses, that there's protections to make sure that
3 these guys don't get retaliated with the help of ICE
4 and Department of Homeland Security because these
5 guys filed complaints on these bosses. So, this year,
6 I just want my education, making sure that these
7 people, mostly migrants, don't be retaliated against
8 by their bosses if want to file complaints,
9 especially in these industrial workforces, like the
10 industrial laundry workforces since a lot of these
11 guys and gals speak Spanish, foreign languages. So, I
12 mean, protect these guys and gals this year. This
13 year is about protecting these guys and gals. We all
14 see what's going on over this country with
15 immigration so that's all I got to say. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON DE LA ROSA: Thank you so much
17 for coming. Thank you.

18 Thank you to all who came here to share
19 your thoughts and experiences.

20 If there is anyone in the Chamber who
21 wishes to speak but has not yet had the opportunity
22 to do so, please raise your hand and fill out an
23 appearance card with a Sergeant-at-Arms in the back
24 of the room.

2 Seeing no hands in the room, we turn to
3 Zoom. If you are currently on Zoom and wish to speak
4 but have not yet had the opportunity to do so, please
5 use the raise hand function, and our Staff will
6 unmute you.

7 Seeing no hands, I would like to note
8 that everyone can submit written testimony to
9 testimony@council.nyc.gov within 72 hours of this
10 hearing.

11 To conclude, I would like to thank all
12 the folks who opened doors into the municipal
13 workforce for aspiring civil service workers. In
14 addition, we would like to take a moment to express
15 our thanks to all the interested advocates, workers,
16 who attended today's hearing, to share your
17 experiences, and to the dedicated staff who organized
18 this hearing.

19 With that, this hearing is now concluded.
20 Thank you so much. [GAVEL]

21

22

23

24

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

World Wide Dictation certifies that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings. We further certify that there is no relation to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that there is interest in the outcome of this matter.



Date January 30, 2025